

**Southern Plains Inventory and Monitoring Network**  
**Technical Committee Meeting**  
**August 11, 2005**  
**Pecos National Historical Park, Pecos, New Mexico**  
**Chair: Alden Miller**

*Attendees:* A. Miller, Chair (WABA), F. Pannebaker, Member (BEOL), T. Benson, Member (PECO), R. Andrade, Member (FOUN), P. Eubank, Member (LAMR/ALFL), F. Revello, Member (FOLS), J. Lott, Member (LYJO), S. Burrough, Member (CHIC), D. Perkins, Member (SOPN), T. Cyphers (FOLS), D. Ditmanson (PECO), K. McMurry (FOLS), K. Brown (LAMR) B. Bingham (IMR), A. Wimer (LAMR/ALFL), G. Willson, (Great Plains CESU), G. Bowser (Gulf Coast CESU), S. Braumiller (IMR stationed at CHIC), H. Sosinski (SOPN), K. Cherwin (SOPN-University of Colorado), T. Zettner (SOPN-Texas A+M), T. DeFex (SOPN-Texas A+M).

Meeting Commenced at 8:30

- I. Meeting began with introductions.
- II. I+M National Update – D. Perkins began meeting with overview of the progress over the past year. Full funding is expected for FY2006.
  - B. Bingham – An IMR I+M communications workshop will be hosted by the Sonoran Desert Network in November. The focus will be on communicating results of I+M program to parks and the changing roles of technical committees and how they will operate in a Phase III network.
- III. Overview of SOPN Progress in FY05
  - Budget surprises: SOPN ended up with \$160,000 less in vital signs money than was planned for 2005. Two potential sources for grassland restoration funding were cut. SOPN did receive \$292,000 for vegetation mapping. Field work for all parks except CHIC will start in FY2005 and aerial photography will be completed at CHIC in FY2005.
  - A. Phase I Report – Progress towards vital signs development was presented. Cooperative agreements established with Texas A+M and University of Colorado for students.
    - 1. Chapter 1 - Ecological Context
    - 2. Chapter 2 - Conceptual Models – Overview of models being developed and the conceptual model workshops that have been held.
  - B. Inventories – All of the original I+M inventories that were overdue have been completed.
    - 1. BEOL Wetlands – New project for FY05 and FY06 for fish and plants with Bureau of Reclamation
    - 2. LYJO Fish – J. Lott arranged for Lower Colorado River Authority to do a deep water inventory at no cost to LYJO or SOPN

3. LYJO Supplemental Plant Inventory – This was a low priority but we decided to fund because: A) Original inventory recommended coming back in a wet year and this was a wet year; B) We had a botanist Roger Sanders, in the park this year doing vegetation mapping; and C) the cost was low (\$3,000) and LYJO paid for half of that.
4. A multi-park bat proposal was prepared but was not submitted due to the budget shortfall which prevented us from having matching funds.
5. SAND Birds – Field work and final report should be submitted by Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory before the end of the fiscal year.
6. SAND Plants – Two year agreement was established with Roy Roath at University of Colorado. Approximately half of this project came from a project funded by the Rocky Mountain CESU.
7. Funding for SAND Rare Species – SOPN submitted and obtained funding from NRPP – Small Park for \$36,000 for FY07 and 08.

C. Vegetation Mapping

1. LAMR and ALFL were already underway
2. New projects established with Colorado Natural Heritage Program for SAND and BEOL, Kansas Natural Heritage Inventory for FOLS, Natural Heritage New Mexico for FOUN, PECO, and CAVO, Botanical Research Institute of Texas for WABA, LYJO, and San Antonio Missions NHP (SAAN). SAAN is outside of SOPN but was done with the same botanist as LYJO and WABA so was logistically easier for the vegetation mapping program. Agreements for classification work with NatureServe for WABA, SAAN, and LYJO, mapping for WABA, SAAN, FOLS, and LYJO with Bureau of Reclamation, and acquiring aerial photography of CHIC with Bureau of Reclamation were also established.

D. NPSpecies Certification

1. SOPN had planned to do all in FY05, then revised to certify vertebrates and to only enter plants in FY05 when budget was cut. This was clearly stated in our WASO approved Workplan.
2. Discussion with Steve Fancy (National I+M Program Leader) on 7/20 led to \$5,000 in additional funds and strong encouragement that we complete as many plant data sets as possible.
3. We will need timely assistance from parks to fill out the management fields of NPSpecies in time to complete certification in FY2005.

IV. Review Draft Annual Report and Workplan

A. The 2005 Workplan was compared to what will be in the 2005 Annual Report. The Draft 2006 Workplan was presented. Highlights and discussion items are below.

1. NPS Species – We originally planned to do this with workshops, but we determine that we can do it cheaper and efficiently by sending vertebrate data sets to experts. The data received from cooperators is high quality, so certification is mainly a matter of review for errors.
2. All original inventories completed.
3. WABA Plant Inventory was done with a cultural landscapes report, the latter is not complete. G. Willson said that he had reached an understanding with B. Hoagland to finish the cultural portion.
4. A bat proposal was prepared but not submitted. F. Revello asked if the bat survey for all 11 parks, but D. Perkins said it was only for the NM and CO parks due to the funding source. G. Willson noted that Southwest Missouri is doing bat inventories for the Heartlands Network and there may be opportunities for collaboration.
5. G. Willson asked where the new vegetation mapping money will go. D. Perkins explained that mapping is a 4 step process. The first step is plot work that is being done now at BEOL, SAND, PECO, FOUN, CAVO, LYJO, WABA, FOLS, and SAAN. The next step is developing a classification system that will be completed by NatureServe and some of the Natural Heritage Programs. The third step is mapping which will be done by Bureau of Reclamation and some of the Natural Heritage Programs. The final step is verification of the map. These projects will be 2-4 years in length. How much we do next year depends on the vegetation mapping budget. B. Bingham asked if scoping was done. D. Perkins said it was completed or planned for 8 of the 11 parks, LAMR and ALFL were done last year and CHIC will be done next fiscal year. F. Pannebaker said they recently had their scoping session and it went well.
6. J. Lott stated that we need the vegetation mapping to be cyclical. B. Bingham said this needs to be discussed with the network and identified in the Phase III report. This has been a contentious point in several networks, as there are no current plans for money to revisit the plant or vertebrate inventories. F. Revello said the vegetation maps were particularly important as we continue restoration efforts.
7. The cooperative agreements with universities for students have worked out really well.
8. Staffing plan was developed in 2005.
9. Heidi attended a mentoring session with Colorado Plateau data manager and the facilitators from other I+M networks at

our Aquatic and Landscape workshop was largely due to B. Bingham's help.

10. We held two workshops with various ecosystem breakout sessions. We have only missed forest communities which will be handled by a peer-review process.
11. Completion of monitoring plan: Phase 1 report for this year and Phase II report for next.
12. We have developed a strategic plan to get us to 2008. Will have another to guide network in Phase III
13. G. Willson asked if there are plans for another national meeting. B. Bingham said it depends on funds for travel but we plan to.
14. B. Bingham said that IMR I+M has lobbied for and have received permission to hire a regional information manager which will help develop a regional plan to develop enterprise projects. The term enterprise is the corporate approach in the sense that I+M information is typically completed as stand alone projects so information ends up in several spaces. We are hoping to build a database to compile all the information. For example weather data can be consolidated and transformed to all networks instead of each network retrieving weather data individually. P. Eubank asked if the parks will be assessed to fund this position. B. Bingham said this is a regionally funded position that was created after another position was vacated. G. Bowser asked about how issues will be resolved when the network boundaries do not always coincide with regional boundaries. B. Bingham said that all information from SOPN or other networks that pertain to parks outside IMR will still be maintained by this IMR position. Parks should be able to access the information even if they are outside our region. If it is information being collected in the other parks outside of IMR that are not affiliated with IMR I+M networks than it may not end up within these databases.
15. B. Bingham also noted that IMR I+M will also develop a regional scientific panel formed. They will provide reviews of Phase Reports and Protocols and participate in vital signs workshops. This will be a financial savings for us. The committee should be 8-12 participants and should be in place this next fiscal year.
16. G. Willson noted that the Natural Areas Association conference will be this September in Lincoln, NE. We are expecting 350 people to attend and focus on the plains inventory and monitoring from other federal agencies and the states. Handouts were provided.

- B. A list of all past, current, and future SOPN cooperative agreements, contracts, and interagency acquisition agreements was presented.

C. 2005 Budget was presented

1. We received a large amount of money from the vegetation mapping program. This program agreed to this because each SOPN park agreed to help in the field and SOPN staff agreed to help oversee data entry and the cooperative agreements.
2. NPSpecies - Contracts has saved a lot of money over the planned workshops.
3. Operations equipment – we bought some additional equipment to accommodate additional summer staff.
4. The FY2005 budget is currently estimated to be over by about \$3,000 but we will probably be closer as costs of the workshop and annual meeting will likely be lower than planned and we will probably get money back from John Reber from the money we designated for Sue Braumiller.  
**Post Meeting Note: We will probably get about \$2,000 back from J. Reber.**

D. 2006 Draft Budget was presented.

1. The current income does not reflect any funding from the vegetation mapping program although some is likely.
2. We will receive \$20,000 from NRPP-Small Park for SAND Rare Species Inventory - not coming out of SOPN money.
3. SOPN hopes to move some money into protocol development at CESUs in FY06. G. Willson noted that all the protocols developed by parks in the Heartlands Network are on the Prairie Cluster website. B. Bingham stated that there is now a national protocol website being developed that will have all I+M protocols on it.
4. B. Bingham commented about assessments. He noted that these are actually WASO assessments that IMR must figure out how to complete. There will likely be a 1-2% assessment on all funding that is not designated for permanent salaries or permanent change of stations. There will also be a computer assessment. After much debate and discussion about the size of the computer assessment, D. Ditmanson made a phone call and stated that the assessments will likely be in the three figure range per computer. The Belarc equipment will pick up computers that access the network even if it is only one time per year. So if you have laptops used off-line, keep them off-line. G. Bowser stated that the workplan should have a line item for assessments. D. Perkins said the revised FY06 budget will have an assessment when it is sent out to the Technical Committee and Board.
5. Approval of the budgets and workplan was tabled at the Request of S. Burrough. **POST-MEETING NOTE: D. Perkins and S. Burrough discussed the budget issues and S. Burrough no longer has reservations about the budget.**

**Since we did not formally approve the budget or workplan, we will do this via email when the document is ready in mid-September.**

**TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING TEMPORARILY ADJOURNED FOR  
SOPN BOD MEETING**

**TECHNICAL COMMITTEE RECONVENED**

- V. Vital Signs Selection Process – Major Goal for FY2006 is to select Vital Signs. D. Perkins presented a process for the Technical Committee’s review.
  - A. First we hold a Prioritization Workshop
    - 1. All technical committee members and 30-40 outside experts
      - B. Bingham and F. Revello asked if the candidate list would be available to the participants before the workshop. D. Perkins said yes.
      - B. Bingham asked how we are coming up with 30-40 experts. Other networks use their advisory science committees. D. Perkins said that we have used suggestions from the technical committee and from looking at university webpages to invite people to our conceptual model workshops. We now have about 30 people who we have some relationship with already.
    - 2. Several breakout groups 4-5
    - 3. Pre-selected criteria with defined ranking systems
      - a. Management significance
      - b. Ecological Significance
      - c. Legal Mandate
      - d. Response Variability
      - e. Feasibility of Implementation
    - 4. 2-3 days
    - 5. **Action Item – January was the preferred date to hold the prioritization workshop.**
    - 6. Potential locations discussed were Otero Junior College (BEOL), Texas A+M, Amarillo (LAMR) and CHIC. P. Eubank said we should meet where it was most economical. **Action Item: D. Perkins will do a cost evaluation to aid in the decision.**
    - 7. The Product of the workshop: Prioritized list developed by experts
  - B. Selection Workshop - The final selection of vital signs will be by the technical committee in the selection workshop. Then the Technical Committee list is presented to the Board for adoption.
    - 1. Actual Selection of vital signs.
    - 2. Chance to take prioritized list and tweak to fit SOPN needs, satisfies FACA requirements
    - 3. Two days, TC only

4. Action Item – Tentative date for this meeting would be February with the same potential locations as discussed above for the Prioritization workshop.
5. Presentation to BOD for Adoption
  - a. This could be done as a third day or at a separate meeting
  - b. Should we invite and pay for Superintendents who are not Board Members? K. Brown said that SOPN should not pay expenses for non-board Superintendents to come. D. Ditmanson said that every park is represented on the Technical Committee, so the parks already are appraised.  
**Post-Meeting Note: K. Brown said that what she meant was that SOPN should not pay for non-SOPN superintendents to come to the meeting. We will discuss this matter later in the fiscal year.**
    - B. Bingham noted this is the approach outlined was similar to the approaches taken by other networks.
    - G. Bowser said that USGS is holding a workshop on metadata and they have offered a one-day technical training, an opportunity to combine meetings. B. Bingham said that prioritization workshops can be a long drawn-out process. D. Perkins said if we combined he would hope for the meta-data to come second.

## VI. Update on Current and Proposed Projects

### A. Inventories

1. Several top ones filled
2. Plans to pursue funding for more holes in FY2006
3. Re-evaluate status of needs
  - J. Lott said that he thinks LYJO needs a bird survey, but that it would not be a high priority.
  - G. Bowser said that CESU should help match funding for bat surveys and some of the other things. Museum specimen search would be a second project. We have a database we can query for RFPs. **Post Meeting Note: D. Perkins, G. Bowser, and G. Willson discussed possibilities for bats at all parks, lichens at CAVO, and a museum specimen search, and we will try to get started on those.**
  - D. Ditmanson noted that baseline inventories at Canoncito and Pigeon Creek have not been done. Pending legislation would have ownership at Canoncito jump from 25% ownership to 85% if a land transfer is approved. This could mean a consolidated inventory.
  - J. Lott asked if there were any aquatic macrobiotic surveys planned that would be of assistance for water quality. D. Perkins said that if we decided to used macro-invertebrates as a vital sign that would justify using vital signs money to do some baseline inventory work. Heartlands use macro-invertebrates as a vital sign. S. Burrough said that CHIC got

some aquatic invertebrate work done with NRPP - Small Park money.

-Discussion about how SOPN can apply for Natural Resource money. SOPN is viewed by region as a park. Some funding networks don't want I+M networks to apply as it increases competition. SOPN has generally worked on proposals that include multiple parks or have been identified by SOPN as high priority needs.

**-Post Meeting Note – B. Bingham was able to secure some end-of-year inventory funds for SOPN. We will receive an additional \$12,000 that will be put towards existing agreements for plants at SAND and fish and wetland plants at BEOL. We originally planned to spend this \$12,000 out of FY06 funds, which have now been freed up. This will be reflected in the draft workplan that will be distributed to SOPN members in September.**

B. Vital Signs

1. Conceptual Models
2. Ph.D. Assistantships
3. Protocol Development

- G. Bowser noted that this year's NPS budget has a lot of money for minority development.

VII. NPSpecies Certification

A. Originally planned to certify all data in FY05

B. After the budget cut, we changed our workplan to state only vertebrates would be certified in FY05 with plants for FY06. We stated that all data would be entered (plants and vertebrates).

C. After emails on 7/19 and phone calls on 7/20 with Steve Fancy (National Vital Signs Coordinator) we were strongly encouraged to get plants done, up to 10K in assistance offered. **Post meeting note: SOPN has been given \$5,000 to complete plant certification in FY2005. We will do our best.**

-H. Sosinski said she will be sending vertebrate lists to parks shortly. She needs parks to review the list and their management fields and send back. D. Perkins emphasized that any help you can give Heidi to get those data sets back quickly would be great.

**Meeting Adjourned at Approximately 2:00**

Brief discussion of SOPN+4 Natural Resource Call Plans

-F. Pannebaker is leading the process and noted that there are not as many funding categories this year.

-There was general agreement that moving the natural resources funding process away from the other funding categories was a good idea.



- A tentative date was set for October 6<sup>th</sup> to have a phone conference to discuss the projects and potential fund sources. Each park should have a one-page description, a PMIS number, and some ideas on what slots you fit in.
- F. Pannebaker also noted that at the grant-writing workshop, Nancy Hori, Pacific West Region librarian has a CD that has all the private granting foundations. They bought one for their library. You can email her and request a list of private foundations to go to outside funding. She will make you a CD if you request keywords.